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ALFRED KAPPES, PAINTER AND ILLUSTRATOR.



UNIVERSAL approbation has stamped the magnificent panorama of feudal legendry painted by Alfred Tennyson in "The Idylls of the King." Serene above the contests of the critics, this splendid pageant of the poet's brain is assured of a place in the van of English poetry for all time. To add to the

volume of praise which has been bestowed on it already, would be to add nothing to the praise itself. The vocabulary of commendation has been exhausted in its honor.

The illustration of "The Idylls of the King" has been frequently essayed. The most important results were those obtained by Gustave Doré. He created a series of pictures which had less of Tennyson than of Doré in them, and which, however beautiful in themselves, cannot be accepted as satisfactory realizations of their subjects. It has been reserved for an American artist, Mr. Alfred Kappes, to give the poet the pictorial interpretation his works demand. The two illustrations of the "Idylls," which we present with this issue of THE ART UNION, are reproductions from the original drawings by Alfred Kappes, a series of forty of which are about to be published, in magnificent form, by Messrs. Pollard & Moss. Our illustrations were specially made by the Ives process, and printed from relief plates. Those of the edition itself will be printed from photogravure plates, which, taken altogether, are the most successful which have ever been made in America.

"The Idylls of the King" will be published as an *édition de luxe*, only 500 copies being printed. Of these, 200 will be sent to England. There will also be special presentation copies for the poet himself, and possibly one or two other illustrious personages. The plates will be printed on British India paper, mounted on heavy plate paper and signed by the artist. The text will be given on parchment paper, with rubricated initials and other embellishments in type specially cast for this work. The volume will be enclosed in covers designed by Mr. Kappes, giving in high relief heraldic and other appropriate symbols, and splendid with gilding. The plates of the illustrations will be destroyed when the edition is completed. This sumptuous folio is to be sold by subscription for \$100 a copy, the publishers reserving the right to advance the price when 200 of the 300 held for sale in the United States are subscribed for.

It is no exaggeration to say that this will prove the most splendid art work ever given out in America. In extent of labor and lavishness of expenditure it has had no equal. The venture is a daring one on the part of the publishers, but their choice of a subject is so happy and the success of the artist so complete, that there is no likelihood that they will regret the investment.

Mr. Kappes, the artist to whom this splendid collection of pictures is due, is a New Yorker both by birth and education. A man of rare originality and the finest artistic sensibility, he owes his position in our art absolutely to his own efforts. The battle of life has been fought by him without allies. He first became known as a draughtsman in black and white, of marked originality and force. His earliest work was distinguished by a spirit and a power of picturesque expression that atoned for a decided harshness and crudity of style. These weaknesses, disappearing with experience, have left all the strength of his early work, refined and made more powerful by development. The pictures to "The Idylls of the King" are unique examples of the highest and most virile black and white art of the country.

The literary sympathies of Mr. Kappes have naturally inclined him to the study of the romantic and the ideal. While he depicts real life with the unflinching hand of the realist, he is capable also of investing the creations of pure phantasy with the most spirited and romantic characteristics. His illustrations to "The Idylls" contain a wealth of study and research into the details of costume, locality, architecture, character and the like,

no less remarkable than the intense vitality with which he has carried the poet's conceptions into tangible pictorial expression. The artificial and theatrical art of a Doré embellished Tennyson without adding to the value of his lines in a single instance. There is not one of these drawings by Mr. Kappes which does not make the text it applies to more clear and vivid to the eye. Their romance is not that of the theatre, it is the romance of the strange, savage, barbarically splendid time itself from which their motives are drawn.

Mr. Kappes, as a painter, has won a reputation distinct in itself. For some years his pictures in oil and water colors have commanded attention at our exhibitions. Their daring originality, their strong grasp of the subject, the sentiment and intellectuality they embodied, bespoke the artist a man for the connoisseur and the critic to remember. Working without a master, the artist has made a style for himself, and which is as original with him as his conceptions and his methods of expression. His improvement has been steady and unbroken, and his painting of "The Rent Day," now in the Louisville exhibition, was one of the pictures of the spring season in this city. Its failure to secure one of the \$2,500 prizes at the American Art Galleries was widely commented on in artistic circles as an injustice.

A NEW SEASON OPENED.

THE studio doors are no longer barred, nor the corridors of the artists' metropolitan haunts given over to the cats. Fresh from mountain and sea-shore, from the refreshing novelty of foreign travel, and the invigorating experience of a summer in common with nature, the disciples of Apelles are back at the easel again, armed for another battle with the malignant and unappreciative critic and the price-cutting patron. The winds of summer have blown the shadow of the last dark winter away, and the prophecy of the winter to come is full of hope.

After the rain comes the sunshine; after the frost, the spring. The dark and dismal cloud of commercial depression has commenced to clear away, and the studio will share in the burst of golden radiance which will follow the long reign of stagnation and gloom. All reports point to the revival and improvement of all the legitimate industries and businesses of the country—a revival which is growing steadily, flooding the great arteries and gradually invading all the minor veins of trade. The long night is over and a long day is at hand.

The commercial interests of a country are all part of one system, a portion of which cannot be assailed without affecting the others. Dull times in one branch of trade means a depression more or less marked in all. When the depression assumes the exaggerated and far-reaching form of stagnation, all businesses fall under the same ban. People must, in the worst of times, eat and drink, and wear clothes, and have houses to live in. But they economize in the essentials while they cut off the luxuries of life—art, unfortunately, still comes under the latter head. The time will doubtless be when this will not be so—when intellectual man will recognize art as necessary to his enjoyment of life as meat and bread are. But it is poor work to sit still and wait for the millennium to arrive. The wiser plan is to set to and make the best of the present, no matter how bad that best may be.

A CURRENT paragraph states that Mr. Henry Irving invents the stage pictures for which his management is famous, composes the scenes, arranges the groups and makes sketches in color of the stage effects, which the scene painters follow; that he shows facility in either pencil or brush, studying the model or copying from the flats with rapid execution, and turning out clever, spirited sketches which are much prized as souvenirs among his friends. The fact remains, all the same, that Mr. Irving's stage pictures are composed and his scenic effects all arranged by professional artists, and not by himself.

WILLIAM PAGE.

SINCE the last issue of THE ART UNION, William Page, one of the greatest painters the century has produced, ended a life of labor and of honor in quiet retirement at Tottenville, S. I. Mr. Page was a great man and a good one, in art and in society. A higher epitaph could not be carved upon an emperor's monument.